

Message Text

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22

ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 PRS-01 H-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-15 SAM-01 ACDA-10 OMB-01 /108 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:MVANORDER:RGH

APPROVED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN

S/PRS -MR. FUNSETH (INFO)

H - MR. FLATEN (INFO)

EUR/P - MR. JERABEK

IO/P - MR. BLACHLY

NEA/ARN - MR. BULLEN

NEA/ARP - MR. AHERNE

AF/P - MR. POPE

NEA - MS. GRIFFIN

----- 126917

R 180207Z FEB 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
CINCEUR

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GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING

FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS
FROM DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESS BRIEFING FOR
FEBRUARY 17, 1976:

Q. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS THAT THE NUMBER OF THE PLA
TROOPS IN LEBANON IS MUCH MORE IN EXCESS THAN ORIGINALLY
REPORTED. THERE HAVE BEEN FIGURES LIKE 20,000, INCLUDING
DISGUISED SYRIAN TROOPS. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT?
CAN YOU CONFIRM IT?

A. I HAVE NO WAY OF CONFIRMING IT NOW. I DO NOT HAVE
ANYTHING ON IT.

Q. COULD YOU PLEASE CHECK IT?

A. SURE.

Q. ONE LAST ATTEMPT AT THE MIDDLE EAST. SOME PLACE ON
THE WIRES TODAY THERE IS A REPORT OF AN IMMINENT MERGER,
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I SUPPOSE IT IS CALLED, OF SYRIA AND JORDAN. DO YOU HAVE
ANY INTELLIGENCE ALONG THOSE LINES?

A. I HAVE SEEN THAT, AND I LOOKED INTO IT. I DO NOT
HAVE ANYTHING FOR YOU ON THAT. I KNOW THERE HAVE BEEN
TALKS BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND THE JORDANIANS, BUT I
REALLY DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING FOR YOU.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY "TALKS", DO YOU MEAN TALKS IN THAT AREA?

A. I MEAN --

Q. CERTAINLY THEY HAVE TALKS.

A. WHAT I REALLY MEAN IS THAT I HAVE SEEN REPORTS FOR SOME TIME IN THE PRESS OF THIS, BUT I HAVE NO WAY OF CONFIRMING ANYTHING FOR YOU.

----- SUBSEQUENT TO THE BRIEFING, THE FOLLOWING Q AND A WAS POSTED FOR THE PRESS:

QUOTE

Q. WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT A REPORT THAT THE NUMBER OF PLA TROOPS IN LEBANON EXCEEDS THE NUMBERS ESTIMATED EARLIER AND MAY NUMBER AS MANY AS 20,000, INCLUDING DISGUISED SYRIAN TROOPS?

A. AS WE SAID PREVIOUSLY WHEN ASKED ABOUT THIS (JAN. 20), WE CONSIDER ANY REPORT THAT THERE ARE 20,000 PLA TROOPS IN LEBANON AN EXAGGERATION. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE PRECISE IN THIS MATTER, REPORTS THAT A COUPLE OF THOUSAND ENTERED LEBANON AT ONE POINT SEEMED REASONABLY ACCURATE. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SINCE THE CEASEFIRE WAS AGREED TO, THE NUMBER OF PLA TROOPS IN LEBANON HAS INCREASED. AS IN THE PAST, WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE OF ANY REGULAR SYRIAN MILITARY UNITS ENTERING LEBANON. END QUOTE

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